DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 049 RC 021 378

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TITLE The Outdoor Education Umbrella: A Metaphoric Model To Conceptualize Outdoor Experiential Learning Methods.
PUB DATE 1996-09-00
NOTE 7p.; In: Spawning New Ideas: A Cycle of Discovery; see RC 021 376.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adventure Education; Camping; Definitions; *Educational Methods; Environmental Education; *Experiential Learning; *Models; *Outdoor Education; Wilderness

ABSTRACT

Explaining what outdoor experiential education is can be problematic, as a variety of terms are being used to identify a wide range of outdoor experiential learning methods. This paper proposes the metaphoric model of an umbrella to explain the relationships existing among these terms and their respective outdoor experiential learning methods. The shank of the umbrella represents the term outdoor education. From the shank, eight different ribs branch off, representing specific outdoor experiential learning methods. These methods are environmental education, earth education, wilderness education, outdoor adventure pursuits education, challenge education, adventure education, and two left unnamed to indicate the flexibility of the model. The canopy of the umbrella, which joins the ribs together, represents the term experiential education, a process common to all the methods. Finally, the handle represents camping education, a term often used to identify school camping programs. Each of the terms is defined in a manner that explains its position in the model. Contains 17 references. (Author/SV)

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ED 416 049

THE OUTDOOR EDUCATION UMBRELLA: A METAPHORIC MODEL TO CONCEPTUALIZE OUTDOOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING METHODS

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Abstract
Explaining what outdoor experiential education is can be problematic. Today, a variety of terms are being used to identify a wide range of outdoor experiential learning methods. Currently, we can count at least eight different terms associated with outdoor experiential education. This presentation will propose the metaphoric model of an umbrella to explain the relationships existing between these terms and their respective outdoor experiential learning methods.

Problématique
The development of a specialized terminology is inherent to the emergence of any field of study. To be recognized as a distinct educational approach, experiential education, like any other area of human activity, had to develop a specific set of descriptive terms. As experiential education became more diversified in content and context, more descriptive terms appeared in our field. Different goals, methods, and teaching environments have led to the creation of new terms, each representing a different experiential learning approach. Consequently, today we can find at least eight different terms associated with outdoor experiential education. Such diversity in terminology is bound to bring confusion to the neophyte, and even to the erudite outdoor educator.

Using terms erroneously can be detrimental to our profession. From an imprecise discourse we project an image of immaturity. In 1988, Gilbert and Chase argued that one of the prevailing problems of that period was the lack of common definition of terms. They stated that if scholars and practitioners were not soon defining what they were doing and agreeing on a common semantic, the future of outdoor education would be uncertain. At the time, the "prescription" they suggested to remedy this malaise was the creation of a "National Outdoor Education Association" (Gilbert & Chase, 1988, p. 28). Fortunately for us, the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) took the lead in this manner and attracted outdoor educators from various programs. Since the mid 80s, terms have been defined (Priest, 1986, 1990) and outdoor experiential learning methods have been categorized, named, and publicized. However, misuse of these terms can still be found in our literature and discourses. The metaphoric model proposed in this presentation will hopefully shed some light on this issue.

The Metaphoric Model
The use of an "umbrella," to explain the relationships existing between outdoor experiential learning methods may first appear simplistic. However, it is this simplicity that helps us conceptualize what has been, for many of us, an eclectic set of terms. The reader will also notice that the umbrella model presented here includes only educational methods that have a close connection with outdoor education and experiential learning. This does not mean that experiential learning is only found in outdoor activities, but simply that I consciously limited my design to outdoor related methods. In order to respect this self-imposed limitation and remain accurate in my discourse, I have used the term "outdoor experiential education" to specify the scope of this model.

The purpose of this model is to help introduce neophytes and students in related fields to the world of outdoor experiential education. The model is easy to understand because it visually and logically explains the relationships existing between the different outdoor experiential learning methods. To complement the visual quality of this model, I have provided "a definition" for each outdoor experiential learning method mentioned. The definitions will help the reader familiarize herself or himself with the educational goals of each method. Before going further, it is helpful to understand where the idea of using an umbrella as a metaphor came from.

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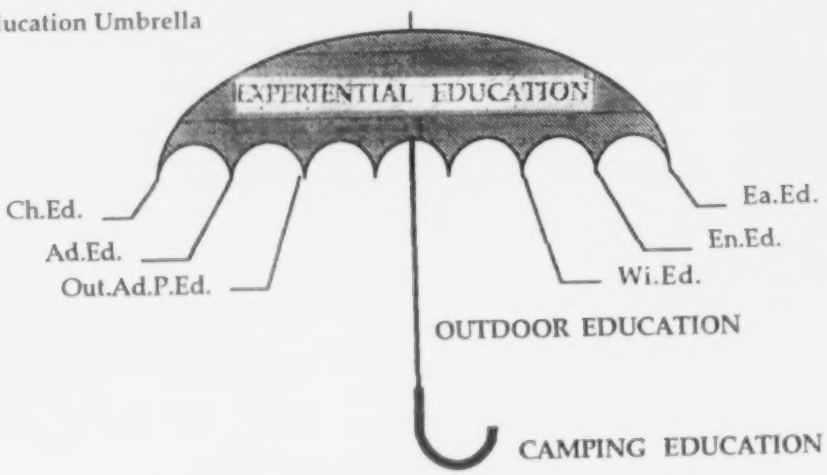
First, outdoor education has often been referred to as an umbrella term (Darst & Armstrong, 1991; Hammerman, 1980; Hanna, 1991). Hence, in the context of this presentation, using the image of an umbrella to help clarify terminology seemed appropriate, especially since outdoor education is considered to be more of a complexity of methods than a specific subject matter (Priest, 1990; Smith, Roland, Havens, & Hoyt, 1992). Second, an umbrella is, metaphorically speaking, a visual aid composed of several distinct elements, an attribute that will make this model even more meaningful.

To utilize the image of an umbrella at its best, consider the following: Imagine that the shank (see Figure 1.0) of the umbrella represents the term outdoor education. From that shank, eight different ribs branch off. Each rib represents a specific outdoor experiential learning method each identified by a specific term. The terms presented in this model are labeled as such: Environmental Education (En.Ed.); Earth Education (Ea.Ed.); Wilderness Education (Wi.Ed.); Outdoor Adventure Pursuits Education (Out.Ad.P.Ed.); Challenge Education (Ch.Ed.); and Adventure Education (Ad.Ed.). The reader will notice that two of the ribs were left unnamed. This omission was purposefully done to indicate the flexibility of the model. As this field evolves, newly recognized terms could be added to the umbrella model.

The canopy of the umbrella, which joins the ribs together, represents the term experiential education. This canopy indicates that experiential learning is a process common to all of these methods. Finally, the handle itself represents the term Camping Education, which is the term often used to identify school camping programs.

Figure 1.0 - The Outdoor Education Umbrella



Relationships

The relationships existing in this model can be explained as follows. Literature in outdoor education indicates that camping education was an important precursor to outdoor education (Hammerman, 1980). Van der Smissen (1980) explains that the 50s were "a transition period from the more basic educational outcomes and the use of the name 'school camping' [camping education] to the broad program operations of 'outdoor education'" (p. 115). She justifies her opinion by stating that "The shift in terminology was so complete by 1960 that only two studies in the 60s and two in the 70s... used the term 'school camping'" (p.117). Because the shank emerges from the handle, it seems appropriate to identify the handle as camping education.

Outdoor education, as the shank, supports the different ribs. Actually, we could say that it is from the shank that the ribs originate. In other words, each outdoor experiential learning method is connected to outdoor education because of the strong historical impact outdoor education had on their development. The umbrella model was also designed to illustrate a major division existing between all of these methods.

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The reader will notice that the left side of the umbrella regroups outdoor experiential learning methods (i.e., Out.Ad.P.Ed.; Ch. Ed.; Ad. Ed.) that mainly focus on the development of self, while the right side of the umbrella regroups methods (i.e., Ea.Ed.; En.Ed.; Wi.Ed.) that focus more on the development of one's environmental ethic. Priest (1986) redefined outdoor education by using the metaphoric image of a tree. In his model, Priest associated the trunk with outdoor education, similarly to the shank of the umbrella, then he divided the upper part of the tree into two major branches. One to the right representing Adventure Education and one to the left representing environmental education. Like Priest (1986), I believe that the outdoor experiential learning methods represented by the ribs in the umbrella model can be regrouped according to the types of relationships they will attempt to enhance. Respectively, the methods found on the left side are more concerned with "intrapersonal" and "extrapersonal" relationships, and the methods found on the right side are more concerned with "ecosystemic" and "ekistic" relationships. These terms will be defined in the next section.

What else do all of these outdoor experiential learning methods have in common? Priest (1986) wrote that "first and foremost, outdoor education is a [complexity of] methods for learning... Second, the process of that learning is experiential" (p. 13). Experiential learning is indisputably common to all the methods found in the outdoor education umbrella. One could say that experiential learning is a common thread between the different outdoor experiential learning methods that were initially influenced by the development of outdoor education. To represent this "common thread" the canopy of the umbrella is identified as experiential education.

Definitions

As mentioned earlier, the differences between these terms can be better understood by defining them. The following section gives a description of each outdoor experiential learning method found in the umbrella.

Camping Education: The term "Camping Education" was coined by the renowned L. B. Sharp (1929) in his dissertation entitled "Education and the Summer Camp - An Experiment" (Rillo, 1980). "While closely related to outdoor education, camping education can be distinguished because there is seldom connection to the schools" (Smith et al. 1992, p. 6). The educational goals associated with camping education are similar to those claimed by outdoor education. The only difference is that camping education was developed outside of the school curriculum and helped lay the foundations for outdoor education.

Outdoor Education: Outdoor education, as explained earlier, is a general term "which includes all activities and processes which rely, at least in part, on the natural environment and which are oriented to enhancing the individual's achievement of variety of educational objectives" (Hanna, 1991, p. 4). outdoor education includes two predominant approaches: environmental education and adventure education (Hanna, 1991; Priest, 1986,1990; Smith et al., 1992). Notice again that these two approaches are found on opposite sides of the umbrella.

Earth Education: "Earth education is defined as the process of helping people live more harmoniously and joyously with the natural world... by providing knowledge of the ecosystems of ecology, instilling deep and emotional attachments to the earth and its life, and helping people to change the way they live on the earth" (Davis, 1992, p. 52). Earth education is closely associated with Steve Van Mater's work and philosophy. Originally known as "Acclimatization" (Van Mater, 1989), Earth education could be considered a sub-group of environmental education. However, Van Mater's goals and methodologies are so original that he prefers to see his approach differentiated from environmental education.

Environmental Education: "Environmental education is concerned with two relationships: ecosystemic and ekistic. Ecosystemic relationships refer to the interdependence of living organisms in a ecological microclimate... Ekistic relationships refer to the key interactions between human society and natural resources of an environment" (Priest, 1990, p. 113). As mentioned previously, in this model the right side

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of the umbrella displays outdoor experiential learning methods that are more concerned with ecosystemic and ekistic relationships.

Wilderness Education: Even though the term wilderness education is currently being used by educators from Outward Bound, the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and the Wilderness Education Association (W.E.A.), there has been little effort from these three organizations to officially define it. Fortunately, Bacher (1990), a former NOLS instructor, offers a three dimensional conceptual matrix that gives a solid foundation for defining wilderness education. He summarizes his matrix by saying that wilderness education "provides both primary and reflective experiences designed to educate *in* the wilderness, implying a place; *about* the wilderness, implying topics; and *for* the wilderness, implying reasons and positive change in the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and spiritual domains of the participants" (Bacher, 1990, p. 34). Wilderness education, by definition, has to be conducted in a wilderness setting, which means that the participants are isolated from human facilities and infrastructures. Such conditions bring to the participant humility as a living being and help renew a sense of wonder (Miles, 1986). Wilderness programs such as OB, NOLS, and WEA can all include elements of adventure and environmental education. However, because of the specific setting (i.e. wilderness) used for these programs and the length of time (i.e. 7 to 30 days) normally spent in this type of setting, this particular outdoor experiential learning method deserve its own specific terminology.

Outdoor Adventure Pursuits Education: Outdoor adventure pursuits education can be defined as: "a variety of... activities utilizing an interaction with the natural environment, that contains elements of real or apparent danger, in which the outcome, while uncertain, can be influenced by the participant and circumstance" (Ewert, 1989, p. 6). This approach distances itself from adventure education because of its strong outdoor pursuit skill component. One could say that the main objective of this method is to learn the outdoor pursuit activity for its own sake. The development of self is often only a byproduct of the experience (Ewert, 1989).

Adventure Education: "Adventure Education is... concerned with two relationships: Interpersonal and intrapersonal. Interpersonal relationships refer to how people get along in a group (two or more people)... Intrapersonal relationships refer to how an individual gets along with self" (Priest, 1990, p. 114). Once again, notice that the left side of the umbrella displays outdoor experiential learning methods that are more concerned with interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. This approach may involve not only traditional outdoor adventure pursuit activities, but also adventure activities experienced on outdoor and indoor artificial structures such as ropes courses and climbing walls.

Challenge Education: "Challenge Education is a complex synthesis of a variety of therapeutic, educational, recreational, rehabilitative, and enrichment strategies" (Smith et al., 1992, p. v). This relatively new term can be associated with Bradford Woods Outdoor Education Center and Thomas E. Smith and his therapeutic work with various clienteles using adventure-based activities.

Experiential Education: "Experiential Education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences" (AEE, 1995, p. 1). This recent definition adopted by AEE is not complete without some of its principles such as: "Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis" (AEE, 1995, p.1).

In conclusion, it is important to restate that this metaphoric model is not definitive. outdoor experiential education's professionals should anticipate the creation of new terms that will reflect new trends and approaches. Some of these new terms like "Expeditionary Learning" and "Outdoor Physical Education" are already emerging. Until then, this conceptual model will hopefully help students in our respected field to construct a new understanding of the terms presently used in outdoor experiential education. Finally, I hope that this model will reinforce the need and importance for scholars and practitioners to use more accuracy in terminology when communicating amongst themselves and with others.

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Bibliography

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